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COMICS NEWS UP TO 3 MONTHS EARLY!

COMIC & CARD PICKS!

VANTAGE
COMIC & CARD PICKS

Inside information for comic dealers and collectors!

#12

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June 1995

UNDERRATED ELVES

PLUS:

LONDON NIGHT VS. BONEYARD!

NEW SHI PLANS!

DISTRIBUTOR WARS!

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THE MOST REVEALING SPOOF EVER EXPOSED!

THE BATTLE YOU NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D SEE!...

APRIL '95

BY BILL MAUS!

pp

A SATIRE THRILLER!

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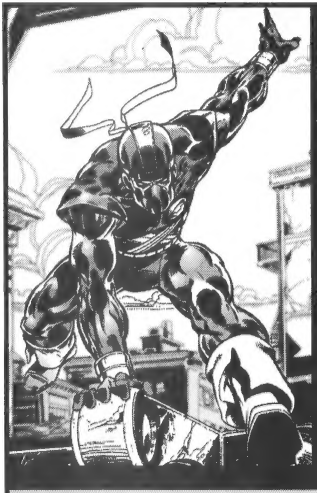

A celebration began this past August when a new generation in the comic book industry shed the name Continüm and emerged as August House, Inc.
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THE DARK

This immortal warrior will come your way, in the midst of night, in full color every five weeks.

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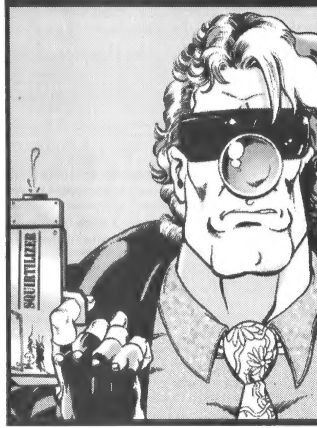

FOODANG

Our second title is the touching story of a circus clown who becomes a superhero, fights some crazy aliens, hooks up with a telepathic runway model, and wrecks a lot of expensive real estate.
AN IMMORTAL WARRIOR AND A CLOWN WITH A GUN INVITE YOU TO THEIR HOUSE...

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VANTAGE™ COMIC & CARD PICKS

number twelve

contents

section

Vantage Picks & News 1
The business of comics hits the fan. Literally.

Bad Girls 2
You be the judge. Who is the coolest new 'Bad Girl" in comics?

Comics Are For Reading First 3
Keller prays to the great Claremont God.

Toy Picks 4
The latest in the toys market.

Sovereign Seven 5
Meet the guy who gets to draw books written the guy that Keller prays to.

Pro's Perspective 6
Lightning comics VP speaks out.

Drew Hayes Interview 7
Poison Elves is such a cool book. Please read it.

The View from Oblivion 8
Ellison has no enimies in Vantage.

Cover: Poison Elves™ & © 1995 Drew Hayes

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Vantage Comic & Card Picks
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THE ONLY SERIOUS FUTURE PICK LIST

TOP PICKS OF THE MONTH

Mighty Thor #491-up (Marvel / Marvel Heroes / Mike Deodato and Warren Ellis)
Poison Elves #1-up (Sirius / Picks up after #20 / Now monthly, better marketing)

MORE VANTAGE PICKS

Bad Girls of Blackout #0 (Black Out Comics / Three characters, Dell Barras art)
I, Lusipher #1-7 (Mulehide Graphics / Poison Elves First appearance)
Poison Elves #8-20 (Mulehide Graphics / Previously I, Lusipher)
Pop Entertainment, all comics (Pop Entertainment / American nostalgia)
Razor Meets The Barbie Twins (Topps / Crossover with London Night / Both up and coming)
Shi #5-6 (Crusade / New "bad girl," major new characters, possible variant covers)
Sovereign Seven #2 (DC / Big changes already!)
Spider-Man Maximum Clonage: Alpha #1 (Marvel / Marvel Heroes / Clear chromium)
WildC.A.T.S, all issues (Image / Wildstorm / Alan Moore to write)

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

WELCOME TO EGYPT

I watched the movie "Joseph" the other day on TNT. It's all about the biblical story of the young Hebrew slave who can interpret dreams. The Pharaoh of Egypt has a dream of seven fat cows and seven thin, hungry cows. Joseph is called in to interpret and he predicts that there will be seven good years of crops followed by seven bad years. Thanks to Joseph's interpretation, and thanks to the Pharaoh's bold decision to make major changes, Egypt manages to store enough grain to survive the seven years of bad crops.

Today's small publishers could have used a Joseph. With Marvel having left its old distribution partners behind, the chips are starting to fall. Andromeda Distribution, which owes **Vantage** and others money, is not answering their phone. It looks like they may be out of business.

What happens if other distributors follow? Well, disaster for many small publishers, because those distributors each owe us all a couple months worth of payment at all times. We count on that money to pay our printers, staff, and expenses.

The good news for **Vantage** is that we did see this coming, and we have done what Egypt did — we have made sure to have cash reserves put away to cover any distributor failings. We're also working on launching a sister product that would take advantage of the changes in the industry, that would even benefit from them.

The bad news for comics is that some small publishers could get hit pretty hard, and that small publishers who don't plan ahead could increasingly see their numbers shrink. The ultimate price will be paid by the fan, because in today's market, if the fans love a title and it is selling nicely, that's no guarantee it will stay in business.

Today, more than ever, its not about how good your product is, its about whether you can predict like Joseph and plan ahead like Egypt.

Rob Golub, Publisher
(The Joseph of comics)

DIAMOND PLEDGES OPEN ACCESS TO MARKETPLACE

In response to Marvel's decision to distribute comics exclusively through Heroes World Distribution — and to exclude non-Marvel products from Heroes World — Diamond has pledged to maintain "open access to the marketplace," said a Diamond statement.

Diamond Comics Distributors is the world's largest comic distributor, trucking and marketing comics to stores for all publishers, with the exception of Marvel.

"Marvel thinks retailers and consumers have too may choices, and everyone would be better off if there wasn't so much competition in the marketplace," said Diamond Vice President of Purchasing Bill Schanes.

Schanes responded to calls from suppliers who were concerned that Diamond would not offer their products in the future by stating, "We have absolutely no plans to drop anyone, or to change the criteria we use to evaluate new submissions. If a product is of reasonable quality and commercial appeal, we'll give our retailers the opportunity to order it. We'll let our retailers decide whether or not it's something they want to offer in their stores."

Small publishers had spoken amongst themselves privately in recent months of their fears that they would be cut out in the consolidation proecess. With all the big changes afoot, it only seemed to make sense that those with the least financial power would get crushed. Many were privately relieved to hear of Diamond's commitment to "open access."

DREAM TEAM MAKES ITS DEBUT

The Marvel universe meets the Ultraverse in a pin-up special. Coming in July, **Dream Team** #1 should create a view to a kill. Some of the industry's bottest creators have picked and drawn the team-ups, to be displayed in a 48-page special.

Some of the creators and characters to be exhibited: Jim Balent (Catwoman) does NecroMantra/Elektra; Joe (Ash) Quesada supplies an Ash/Wolverine/Prime pin-up, William (Shi) Tucci portrays Shi/Mantra/Archangel, and many others drawing Marvel and Ultraverse favorites, with a few special guests, such as The Tick. "We let the **Dream Team** creators pick their own pin-up combos! And this time, some of the creators' own creations meet their Marvel/Ultraverse counterparts! This is the first time that creator-owned characters have been published alongside Marvel and Ultraverse characters," said Dan Danko, editor of the book.

Watch for the Marvel/Ultraverse **Dream Team** #1 in July.

TEKNO • COMIX GOES ROBOTIC

I-Bots, a new title from Tekno•Comix, ships in August. The story centers around five genetically cloned robots who were intended to represent a new era in human development, but instead become outcasts. The book follows the androids' attempts to escape an evil organization and their struggle to become a part of society.

I-Bots were created by Isaac Asimov, the dean of 20th century science fiction and well-known writer. "It is a great honor for Tekno•Comix to add to our roster a comic that was conceived by a writer of such great stature as Isaac Asimov," said Mitchell Rubinstein, co-founder of Tekno•Comix. George Perez (Avengers, Wonder Woman) will be penciling the book, with Howard Chaykin (Power & Glory) and Steven Grant (Punisher) rounding out the creative team.

POISON ELVES

POISED FOR TAKE-OFF!

It's the story of an Elf with a big mouth and a gun. Just when you think you're reading a standard D&D rip-off book, the elf pulls out his pistol and blows a troll away.

Little-known **Poison Elves** is one of the highest-quality independent books being published today. It's been around for three years, but you probably have never heard of it.

You will. No longer will creator-owner Drew Hayes attempt to publish, market, and run his business all by himself. Sirius has agreed to publish **Poison Elves,** doing professional marketing and advertising for the book. This book, which has already been turning enough heads to increase monthly sales by 600% over the last two years, now relaunches with a new first issue.

Much like **Creed,** we expect Poison Elves to take off *within its category.* **Poison Elves** might never appear on your big mag's cover, but we do expect back issues to sell well at the shows to a small but devoted and growing group of fans. The market for hot independent comics is growing fast, as readers tire of the tidal wave of mediocre books from the big publishers.

The best part of **Poison Elves** is that Hayes lets the pictures tell the story. Aren't you tired of seeing the villain say, "I'm going to crush you like a bug," as Spider-Man is crushed under the foot of a bad guy? The artist isn't trusted to tell the story right, so the writer explains it to the reader. Hayes has plenty of dialogue, but he doesn't use it as a crutch. Sometimes he tells his story by just drawing it. Hayes lets you watch the action unfold, where another creator might feel the need to explain it.

"You explain an event and then use the picture to continue the action," said Hayes. "I try to use a lot of nonverbal panels. I don't want to hit the reader with 5000 things." Why don't all artists draw this way? "There's a trend in the industry to overload a book with words and images. It has a lot to do with the status that the industry is trying to put on creators and writers." Hayes says that artists and writers pack as much into each book as possible, thinking that more content will bring them more status. "The attitude is, this is the one that's going to win me the comic book Nobel prize."

But Hayes' growing circulation isn't going to his head. In fact, Hayes' pet peeve is the occasionally bloated creator's ego. "It' not like anybody's building a statue of you or naming a ship after you, so don't get a big head over it 'cuz it just makes you pathetic."

Hayes also uses his art to tell the story of a world of elves with personalities that remind **Vantage** of Beavis and Butt-head. This is something that would be really hard to do in a novel. Fantasy novels can only set their scenes with words, so they rely heavily on medieval speak, to give you the flavor of fantasy. But Hayes uses the comic medium to its fullest — again, he lets the pictures tell the story. The pictures of swords, elves, and chain mail make it a fantasy story, even as one character screams, "I tried to talk you out of this, you dumbass!"

Hayes reflected on how he first decided to give his characters 1990s' personalities. "I tried to take the fantasy traditions and make something new. I

thought, do I have these guys talking lofty medieval jargon? The world of Poison Elves — it's not the Earth 500 years ago, it's a total world and reality all its own. I think that if there was magic on our earth 500,000 years ago, our society would have evolved a lot faster. Evalin [the elf home world] is compatible to our modern times on our world."

Poison Elves back issues have already been known to sell for well above cover price, but the title is not listed in most of the price guides. **Poison Elves** almost went under when orders came in for about 1000 for #10, but ten issues later, orders are six times higher. Even 6000 is a nice low number, but the numbers are starting to climb still higher. Immediately after #20 is Sirius' **Poison Elves** #1, due out now with a run of 12,000.

Up until #10, **Poison Elves** was magazine-sized — we're sure this was hurting orders. Retailers have racks built for comic-sized items and they don't want to buy something that doesn't fit. Also, a book that can't fit in a box at the shows has a poor chance of taking off in the after-market.

But after switching to comic-sized, orders started to grow to a recent high of 6,000 for **Poison Elves** #20. Poison Elves is a fun read that deserves more attention from readers and show dealers. With or without help from **Vantage, Poison Elves** is finally starting to get the attention it deserves. In some parts of the U.S., **Poison Elves** is very, very hot. Elsewhere it is completely unknown.

With #20, creator Drew Hayes will stop trying to do it all himself. "I've self-published **Poison Elves** for over three years now," Hayes wrote to his readers in #20. "Thirty-nine months exactly without missing a beat. But now, in a sense, I quit. Self publishing. NOT **Poison Elves.** Why? And what's going to happen now? The why is the hardest thing. Why is not because of any tragedy or great evil, but because I've been offered an alternative that appeals to me and I see it as a guarantee that **Poison Elves** will survive with more assuredness and longevity than I can see myself giving it now."

Hayes appropriately takes **Poison Elves** to Sirius, the company that has quickly created a niche for itself as a showcase for some of the most underrated talents in the industry. **Poison Elves** is due out now.

Interior Art from ***Poison Elves*** *#20*

CROW!
OHMIGOD! THIS IS IT. HE'S FINALLY FLIPPED!
ALRIGHT! WHERE ARE YOU, YOU LITTLE, PURPLE, PANSY-ASS FRUITCAKE!!!!!!!
UH, LUISE? PERHAPS YOU SHOULD LIE DOWN A WHILE...

Poison Elves™ & © 1995 Drew Hayes

SHI IS BATTING 1.000

Fourth Consecutive Issue Sells Out From Publisher

Since **Vantage** first covered **Shi** #1, months before it came out, we have published over a dozen monthly issues ... yet **Shi** #4 was just published!

Still, the fans love it — **Vantage** supposes absence really does make the heart grow fonder. **Shi: The Way of The Warrior** (as it is now called) #4 sold out in less than three weeks, creator Bill Tucci told **Vantage.**

"I called in a Diamond Distributors reorder to the printer and they called me back 29 copies shy of filling it," said Tucci. "The reorders were coming in so fast I wasn't aware of how few copies were left. I barely had any copies for my friends and family."

Each of the three previous issues are sold out as well. "Although orders have increased with every issue it is obvious that people are still underestimating the strength of this title, because supply has clearly not met demand," said newly-hired Director of Promotions Brian David-Marshall.

Previously a family-run company, where Tucci himself was responsible for creating, marketing, and everything else, Crusade now moves in a new direction by hiring staff. David-Marshall will have a tough act to follow as he takes on some of Tucci's marketing responsibilities. Tucci has a real feel for what fans want. His "Fan Appreciation Edition" was the best euphemism for "reprint" that **Vantage** has ever heard. We think the wording alone must have doubled sales!

Even with serious cash in hand, fans can't find copies of **Shi** #1. The Trade Paperback is now out, beautifully colored, with a forward by Chris Claremont who lives a subway ride away from Tucci in New York.

SOMETHING FUNNY ABOUT SHI #5 & #6

There's something funny going on regarding **Shi** #5 and #6. **Vantage** hears whispers of possible split covers and the first appearance of a major new "bad girl." Plus, Tucci told **Vantage** that "major new characters will be introduced" in **Shi** #5-6. These issues will be unusually important books in Crusade continuity.

For dealer's tables, and get-in-on-the-ground-floor-reading, these books will be the place to be. Tucci knows that hot today does not mean hot tomorrow and he has informed **Vantage** that he plans to make **Shi** #5 and #6 into very special books for the fans. Remember, this is a guy who knows how to market a book better then ten suits in any conference room. Recommended.

Cover Art to Shi #4

The Sandman Moves Towards An End

Sandman Art™ & © 1995 DC Comics

The "Kindly Ones" is the final storyline of the beloved Sandman series from Neil Gaiman and DC, and it's coming to a close.

Gaiman's final issue will be **The Sandman** #75 and though Gaiman doesn't own the character, he has gotten DC to agree that they would not publish it again unless he is the writer. Gaiman intends to do a variety of projects after **The Sandman** #75, but nothing on a monthly basis for the time being.

It seems fitting to **Vantage** that a series with so much dignity should end with the creator's exit. We prefer it to the more common tactic of bleeding successful characters dry, and using them for decades by retelling the same stories over and over. A tip of the hat to DC and Gaiman for realizing that good things can, and sometimes should, come to an end.

What better way to end the series than with a wake? "The Wake" begins in **The Sandman** #70, the June launch for a three-part story that leads into the end of the series. In The Wake, "friends and loved ones, relatives and rivals, fleeting lovers and immortal enemies gather to pay their respects ... and to mourn their loss," says DC.

"We'll see a number of old friends again," reveals Gaiman, "and get to meet a very important new one."

Deadline™ & © 1995 DC Comics

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS AND BONEYARD FIGHT IT OUT

Publishers of Razor Don't Want Boneyard To Publish Crossover

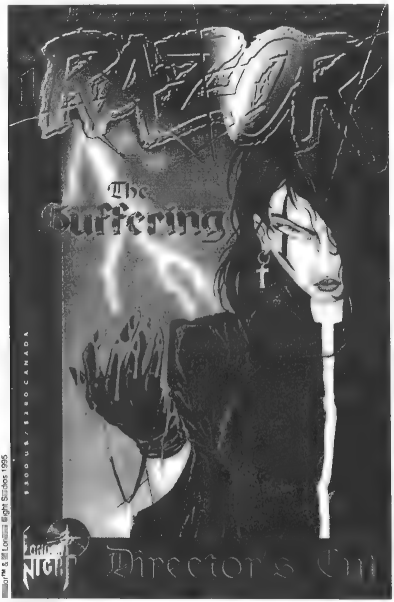
London Night Studios, publisher of Razor, has threatened legal action against Boneyard Press in an effort to prevent Boneyard from publishing a trade paperback with Razor in it. The title of the book is **Razor vs. Dark Angel: To The Death.**

Razor is London Night Studios' popular "bad girl" character. Boneyard Press is the publisher known for living on the edge, having published controversial titles like **Doin' Time With O.J.**

London Night Studios says that while they had originally agreed to allow Boneyard to publish a Razor/Dark Angel trade paperback, Boneyard must now be kept from publishing it. In an open letter to publishers and distributors, London Night Studios accused Hart Fisher of Boneyard Press of failure to pay past debts. London Night Studios is also upset about Fisher's reported plans to "kill" and "rape" Razor.

"I don't know what kind of chip [Hart Fisher] has on his shoulder," said London Night Studios Publisher Everette Hartsoe. Also, Hartsoe says that reported plans to "kill" and "rape" Razor "have upset Razor fans," and that Boneyard "neglected to go over plot and story ideas ... that would affect our most popular character." Hartsoe added, "I'd be willing to work it out if he would turn this into a parody."

London Night Studios' lawyer, Scott A. Matthews, promised "immediate litigation" against anyone who engages in "illegal publishing or distribution" of the trade paperback. Hartsoe has been contacting printers and distributors, asking that they not handle the book.



Razor™ & © London Night Studios 1995

Hartsoe has been contacting printers and distributors, asking that they not handle the book.

Hart Fisher insists that he has the right to publish it, and that he will publish it. Fisher said that Hartsoe "shouldn't have sold the rights," if he didn't want Boneyard to publish the book.

But Hartsoe is taking no prisoners. "It's not just about his book, it's about his whole attitude since the beginning of Boneyard time," he said. "Why does Hart Fisher do anything that people don't want him to? Because they don't want him to. That's where he tries to make his money from."

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS TAROT CARDS

A total of 6 different tarot cards will each be polybagged with a different London Night Studios book. Several cards will be images of Razor, but some will not feature the heroine at all. One will be a photograph of a grave!

Each card will have a tarot theme, such as Death, Sword, Fate, Fool, and so on. The first card of the set will be bagged in **Razor** #4, where Razor dies. London Night Studios will, yes, kill Razor themselves in spite of their opposition to Boneyard's plans.

A new **Razor** #1 will follow soon after, featuring the rebirth of Razor. Also, look for **Razor Meets The Barbie Twins,** a book that should really do well from Topps.

Razor™ & © London Night Studios 1995

BONEYARD TO PUBLISH MISSING CHILDREN CARDS

Boneyard Press is close to signing a deal with the producers of the America's Most Wanted television show that would allow them to publish missing children trading cards, Publisher Hart Fisher told **Vantage.**

The card set would be called "Missing," and each card would feature a missing child. Fisher hopes the card set will help to find a missing child. The card set would ship this summer, would have about 190 cards, 10 cards per pack, and there would be a follow-up trade paperback featuring more information about each child.

Ten percent of the profits will go to charities associated with missing children, said Fisher, and he said he would offer the set "at cost to schools and libraries."

POP ENTERTAINMENT LAUNCH!

CO-FOUNDER OF PERSONALITY COMICS & TRIUMPHANT IS BACK!

The co-founder of Triumphant Comics and Personality Comics has returned to the business with a new company, Pop Entertainment.

After shutting down Personality and Triumphant and leaving comics for over a year, Adam Post now returns as Publisher and President of Pop, which will publish comics focusing on famous people. Since Post has already been successful with Personality Comics (one of the top ten comic suppliers in 1992) and since Pop will basically be doing the same thing, look for a potentially successful launch.

Personality Comics had originally been put aside to start Triumphant, and Triumphant was killed by bad timing. At Triumphant, Post found himself publishing a new universe of heroes at the height of the glut. Post is a good marketer, and the company actually held on for far longer than many insiders had expected.

"There's really a lot of opportunity with the market changing"

Adam Post
Publisher Pop

The first offering from Pop in May will be, you guessed it, an O.J. book that will tell the story of "wife beatings, betrayal, threats, panicked escape, and his alleged murdering of his wife," said a Pop statement. **The O.J. Simpson Papers** #1 will be a flip book that should travel well at shows. In fact, you can still sell Personality Comics titles from 1992 at shows for cover price — all you need is for the right person to see the right personality on the cover and you have made your sale. **Vantage** expects show dealers and retailers to have an equal level of success with Pop.

Also due out in May is **Pamela Anderson Uncovered** #1 (the Baywatch blonde) and **The Shaquille O'Neal Story** #1. June will feature a book on Marilyn Monroe and and another called **TekTrek: The William Shatner Story** #1.

Future titles will focus on The Beatles, Michael Jordan, Mike Tyson, and Patrick Stewart.

VANTAGE TALKS TO POP ENTERTAINMENT'S ADAM POST

Post is happy to be back in comics. "It does feel really good," he said. "There's really a lot of opportunity with the market changing."

He insists that a smart company can make it in today's tough market. "The key to it is creating a longer shelf life for quality products," he said, "The market for retailers has gotten tougher and tougher, so they're not as likely to take a chance. We intend to give retailers the

opportunity to restock by overprinting and then offering them directly to retailers as reorders."

Telemarketing and direct mail are powerful sales tools that most comic book companies don't employ. Post has seen this work in other industries and he plans to bring them to this industry. "If you spend $10,000 contacting retailers and you sell $20,000 worth of product you should be okay."

What happened to Personality Comics and Triumphant? "The quality of Personality was getting worse and worse. As we overproduced the Personality products, orders went down on a per-title basis, so the quality of the books dropped." Its a cycle that many publishers in comics fall into — orders drop, so publishers skimp on art, writing, and general quality control while increasing the number of titles. "We were really exhausted from being a hack shop."

Post feels sure that if he provides retailers with a quality product, they'll stand behind him. "Retailers are the nicest people in the business. They just keep trying things. All they're looking for are some half-decent comics and they'll buy them."

Will any Triumphant characters ever return? Post would only mention his old favorites as possibilities, **Company X** (which never came out) and **Chromium Man.**

Art for ***Pamela Anderson Uncovered*** *#1*

Superman™ & © 1995 DC Comics

IS DC COMICS NEXT?

POSSIBILITY OF EXCLUSIVE DEALS CONFIRMED!

Capital City Distribution has become the first distributor to publicly acknowledge that exclusive deals between publishers and distributors may be in the works, as **Vantage** reported months ago.

In a recent issue of *Internal Correspondence*, Capital's magazine for store owners, Capital President Milton Griepp said that there was a "strong possibility" that the entire industry might move towards "exclusive distribution." The news section of the *Internal Correspondence* suggests that DC may lead the way: "DC has indicated their preference for an exclusive relationship with a vertically aligned distributor. Other dominoes are also about to fall."

Griepp indicated that he had confidence in Capital's ability to change with the industry. "I like our odds," he said.

DARK HORSE REACTS TO MARVEL EXCLUSIVITY

Dark Horse Publisher Mike Richardson: "Every retailer must now question Marvel's intentions in purchasing Heroes World. Is this the beginning of a new chapter, a refocusing on the direct market stores which have made Marvel an entertainment giant? Or is this an attempt to gain control of the distribution and retail process of our industry?

DAVE SIM REACTS TO MARVEL EXCLUSIVITY

In a recent issue of Cerebus, Dave Sim said: "We are poised on the brink of a black day in the history of our medium." He added, "The medium will endure. We are only its custodians with prescribed roles within its confines as creators, publishers, distributors, retailers, and customers. The medium clearly favors a level playing field, fair play, and fair treatment, and deals harshly with those who violate these basic values."

The Mask™ & © 1995 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.

"We are poised on the brink of a black day in the history of our medium."

Dave Sim

EXTREME 3000 TO FEATURE THE FUTURE OF IMAGE

Image's new future-style family of comics, called Extreme 3000, debuts this August.

3000 A.D: versions of Prophet, Youngblood, New Men, and Supreme will be the first to kick off the new line in August and September. "The future of Image is now," said Extreme spokesman Matt Hawkins.

"These four books form the nucleus of the Extreme 3000 universe and will present readers with a tight, consistent world and defines the look for the Image universe in the distant future," he added.

Is it a 2099 rip-off? Image promises this "future-verse" will have better art, better writing, and a different slant. "Extreme 3000 is by no means to be mistaken with Marvel 2099. It is more in line with the 'Age of Apocalypse' in that this is the time line in which these characters interact. But unlike the 'Age of Apocalypse,' this is not a What If, a fantasy, or an Elseworlds-type story," said Hawkins.

"This is the future of these characters. We usher it in when the 1,000 year-old Badrock arrives with the futuristic Youngblood in **Team Youngblood** #18 to stop an aggressive act against the Katellan race that would forever alter the Earth's future." Thus, **Team Youngblood** #18 kicks off Extreme 3000 by immediately crossing over future characters with present characters.

Story elements will include the Earth's Western Hemisphere under martial law, dozens of Youngblood squadrons enforcing this law, the New Men as the rebels. And for dessert, Manhattan will be a giant prison.

TRISTAR PLANS FILM FOR PROPHET

Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios has sold the film rights to **Prophet** to TriStar Pictures.

The *Hollywood Reporter* put the news on its front page, quoting Stacey Snyder, president of production at TriStar, "Rob Liefeld has helped to revolutionize the comic book industry ... he's agreed to join with TriStar in bringing this exciting new project to the screen."

TriStar is said to have paid a high six-figure sum for the right to make a Prophet movie, and that's just for starters. If the movie comes out, Extreme could earn considerably more.

Liefeld currently has two other film projects in development — **Doom's IV** for Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment and **The Mark** for Tom Cruise and Paula Wagner's production company.

Badrock™ & © Rob Liefeld

ALAN MOORE To Write WildC.A.T.S

The combination of Image and Moore writing is sure to make ***WildC.A.T.S*** *one of the best reads in comics.*

Acclaimed writer **Alan Moore** will follow James Robinson's tenure as writer on WildStorm Productions' **WildC.A.T.S: Covert Action Teams.**

Moore starts his run on the series with issue #21, a four-issue story arc that takes the team back to their home planet of Khera. The combination of **Image and Moore writing is sure to make WildC.A.T.S** one of the best reads in comics.

Moore's past credits include work considered to be some of the best scripts in comics. They include: **Watchmen, Killing Joke, Swamp Thing, Marvel Man, From Hell,** and others too numerous to list. WildStorm Editor-in-Chief Bill Kaplan said of Moore, "Alan is one of the finest talents working in the industry, and we're very excited to have him writing our flagship title. We look forward to seeing his unique spin on the WildC.A.T.S as they finally visit their home world, Khera."

Brandon Choi and Jim Lee both anticipate Moore's take on their popular characters with interest and enthusiasm. Travis Charest remains on the book as the regular penciler.

WildC.A.T.S #21 is due out in June.

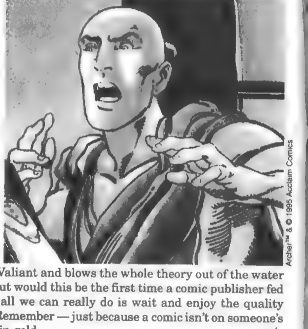
PHAM!
PHAM!
PHAM!
THESE SCUM ARE WALKING DEAD, FILLED WITH DREAD FOR WHAT THEY'VE DONE. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'VE DONE IS WRONG. I CAN SEE THAT IN THEIR EYES AND HEAR IT IN THEIR STAMMERS.
BUT THEY'RE AFRAID.
TRAITORS ARE HIGHER TO THOSE THEY'VE SIDED WITH.

Grifter™ & © 1995 Aegis Entertainment, Inc. dba Wildstorm Productions

COULD THE VISITOR BE... ?

If you're a Valiant fan and you haven't wondered about the true identity of the Visitor, then you must be living in a cave. It's been about a year since Valiant started its "The Visitor Is Coming" promotion and we still don't know who the Visitor is yet. The majority of the people spoken to by **Vantage's** Valiant investigator believe it's Archer (from **Archer & Armstrong**).

This makes some sense because during the Chaos Effect, the Visitor was at the temple where Archer studied and just watched as events unfolded; it was as if he knew what the outcome was going to be before it happened. There is also the fact that Bernard Chang, the artist on the book, has publicly stated that the cover of **The Visitor** #9 was of Flamingo (from Harbinger) and the Visitor. This is worth noting because, in the future, Flamingo and Archer get married; so, at the very least, there is some merit to the Archer/Visitor theory.



But, of course, along comes Kevin VanHook from Valiant and blows the whole theory out of the water by saying very bluntly that the Visitor is not Archer. But would this be the first time a comic publisher fed the public a little disinformation? We think not. So, all we can really do is wait and enjoy the quality material Valiant is publishing each and every month. Remember — just because a comic isn't on someone's hot, top ten list doesn't mean it isn't worth its weight in gold.

Robert Yeremian contributed to this article.

NEW SHI TITLE FROM CRUSADE!

Crusade Entertainment will add a new title to their line-up alongside the highly successful **Shi: The Way of the Warrior**.

July will mark the debut of **Shi: Senryaku**, a three-issue miniseries that will depict **The Thirty Six Strategies**, a Japanese martial classic.

Editor Gary Cohn says of the new title, "The essence of Asian warfare is embodied in the martial classics of Japan and China. The Thirty Six Strategies are at the heart of Shi's war against the Yakuza; a guide to deception, misdirection, and how to capitalize on the weaknesses of your foe."

In the miniseries, Shi portrays each of the Strategies, and the very best artists in comics will be illustrating the books, among them such comic luminaries as: Jim Lee, Dave Sim, Geoff Darrow, Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, and, of course, Bill Tucci. Each of the artists will present one of the strategies and reveal a different aspect of the haunting Shi. "This is a very exciting project," says Cohn. "One of the comments we hear most frequently from readers is how much they enjoy the authentic detail of **Shi: The Way of the Warrior.** Here is an opportunity for us to simultaneously teach and thrill our fans." The miniseries will be written by Cohn and Tucci.

Shi: Senryaku, Book 1, will ship in July. It is dedicated to Tucci's close friend Vito Carlucci, who has been stricken with Multiple Sclerosis. A portion of the proceeds will be contributed towards his medical expenses.

DEODATO TO DO THOR

Acclaimed **Wonder Woman** artist Mike Deodato will be penciling Marvel's **Thor** on a regular basis, according to Deodato spokesman Dave Campetti. The bad news is that **Thor** is one of the lamest books that Marvel has, and that it's not a "bad girl" book, the man's specialty.

The good news is that **Thor** is so low that it's got nowhere to go but up. The word is that Marvel wants to turn this book into a blockbuster, and with the talent they're putting on the book, they just might do it.

The buzz among some in the industry is that writer Warren Ellis is a rising star. Well, he and Deodato start together on #491. Clearly, Marvel is trying to emphasize a new beginning for collectors here. All of the old stuff is out. Writer Roy Thomas is out, and so is the current storyline. Sif and Thunderstrike got booted out of continuity and loose ends are wrapped up.

Are we reluctant to get behind a lame book like **Thor?** Sure. But if anybody can pull this off it's Deodato and Ellis. Hey, Ellis, if you're reading this, PLEASE write in a hot female sidekick for Thor! You will triple sales. Hey, anybody who's reading this who will meet or who knows Ellis, tell him to do that, okay?

Ellis is at a show? Tell him while he signs your book. Ellis is at McDonalds? Tell him while you ask him if he wants fries with that. Just tell the man that Deodato needs some serious "Bad Girl" action to work with until he has no choice but to listen to the fans (who have been programed by **Vantage,** but don't tell him that part).

Dealers will want a few Deodato **Thors** for the table and fans should be sure to check out this eye-candy. **Vantage** expects the best drawn **Thor** since Simonson.

As long as we're on the subject, Simonson's **Thor** was THE defining Thor. Nothing can top it. Nothing can compare. If you've never read it, run FAST to your local shop and buy those back issues. It's his best work, and the best **Thor** ever. No hype.

VANTAGE QUICKIES

SOVEREIGN SEVEN #2 — LOTS HAPPENS

Cascade, the leader of the Sovereign Seven, is slain in **Sovereign Seven #2**, resulting in the creation of a new villain from her enslaved soul. Ha! There's Claremont for ya, it's the second issue and already he's killed off the central character, introduced a major new one, and anything else can happen.

The new villain is Nike, goddess of victory, and with her new evil allies, she becomes locked in a death struggle with her former friends.

An easy big-time pick for dealers and for reading. Check out those Dwayne Turner pencils in our interview this issue!

GEMSTONE TO PUBLISH OVERSTREET'S FAN

Gemstone Publishing, Inc., has announced that it will publish a new full-color monthly magazine — **Overstreet's Fan.**

While the magazine will cover a variety of different subjects of interest to today's comic book reader and collector, **Vantage** has learned that the magazine is targeting a slightly younger audience than **Wizard** or **Hero.** The publication is said to have less market coverage, less coverage of the business of comics, and more coverage of the things younger fans like to see.

Editor Mike Renegar said that the magazine will promote the comic book business and help to bring more people into comics by featuring articles devoted to all aspects of the industry.

Gemstone, a division of Diamond Comics Distributors, acquired Overstreet last year. **Vantage** expects a high-quality publication that will give the competition a real run for its money.

BAD GIRLS OF BLACKOUT #0

Bad Girls of Blackout #0 features the first appearance of Ms. Cyanide and Ice as well as a special gold wrap-around cover featuring all four of the sexy bad girls. Additional features will include appearances of Violet and Lady Vampire. Basically, you get four females in one book. This one should blow out, especially if artist Dell Barras is having a good day — sometimes he draws real eye-candy, sometimes he doesn't.

Sovereign Seven™ & © 1995 Chris Claremont

GLORY #1 HITS THE RACKS

Glory #1 is out and the artwork is impressive. "We've had requests to do a Glory series for years," said Image spokesman Matt Hawkins, "but we've been waiting for the right creative team to do it.." Artist Mike Deodato, Jr. is an up and coming hot artist and writer Jo Duffy has been critically acclaimed for her work on strong female characters, and for her work on **Catwoman.**

WIZARD JUMPS ON TO CREED

Wizard has dispatched a photographer to take pictures of **Creed** creator Trent Kaniuga, said Lightning Comics' Steve Zykowski. Look for pictures of Kaniuga's high school along with a major article on **Creed** in **Wizard.** "Industry professionals are already talking about the comic in large circles and I couldn't be more grateful. I'm sure your promotion started the bandwagon," Zykowski told **Vantage.**

VANTAGE QUICKIES (Continued)

JUDGE DREDD-THE MOVIE

If you don't want to know the plot, stop reading here. We're betting you can't resist, so read on.

When Mega-City One stands at the brink of being torn apart by gang war, the Justice Department sends its number one lawman, Judge Dredd, to quell the fires of revolution. But Dredd winds up being tried and convicted of breaking the very law he is sworn to uphold. He's stripped of his judicial powers and sent to the Aspen Penal Colony for life.

Dredd escapes incarceration, makes his way through the streets of Mega-City One while being hunted by other Judges. He searches for the man who framed him, who somehow has the same fingerprints and genetic structure as Dredd!

DC's got a movie adaptation due out around the same time the June movie comes out.

SHI CROSSOVER WITH CYBLADE

Look for a **Shi** crossover with Image's **Cyblade** this summer, called **Battle for Independence**. Contributors will include Dave Sim, Joe Quesada, Jimmy Palmiotti, Geoff Darrow, and Jim Lee! Due out in July.

Spider-Man™ & © 1995 Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc

SPIDER-MAN MAXIMUM CLONAGE: ALPHA

You're not really surprised are you? If Alpha=$, Marvel will publish Alphas. Such is the world of comics. With a $4.95 cover price, this clear chromium book is sure to sell out quickly (fans love the clear chromium — books like **Doom 2099** that have surprise-featured it have been a hit) Alpha launches the Maximum Clonage storyline where Spider-Man battles an army of Spider-clones. This ridiculously named storyline will be wrapped up by, you guessed it, an Omega. Also, there'll be a (groan) **Avengers: Alpha.** Why does **Vantage** get the feeling we'll be seeing Alphas and Omegas for everything from Hulk to Paste Pot Pete? (Hmmmm ... wonder how a **Vantage: Alpha** would sell? Heh-he.)

BAD GIRLS

BAD GIRLS

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF THE BIG THREE-SHI, VAMPIRELLA AND LADY DEATH, THE INDUSTRY HAS EXPLODED WITH "BAD GIRL" ACTIVITY! SOME OF THE FEMALE HEROINES AND ANTI-HEROINES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AROUND, BUT NOW THEY'VE BEEN REDEFINED BY THEIR PUBLISHERS AS "BAD GIRLS." OTHERS ARE BRAND NEW. ALL HAVE ONE THING IN COMMON-THEY'RE BEING PUSHED INTO THE NEWLY REVIVED "BAD GIRL" MARKET, TO SINK OR SWIM (BUT MOST WILL SURELY FLOAT).

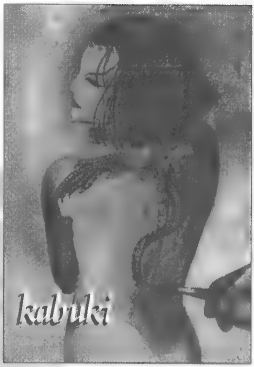
WILL ANY ONE OF THESE 14 CONTESTANTS ATTAIN "SHI" STATUS? YOU BE THE JUDGE-REVIEW THESE PAGES AND VOTE IN OUR CONTEST AT THE END. WE'LL PROCLAIM THE WINNING FEMME FATALE "MOST UP AND COMING BAD GIRL IN COMICS!" (AND WE'LL DOLE OUT A SECOND PLACE AND THIRD PLACE SHOWING, TOO).

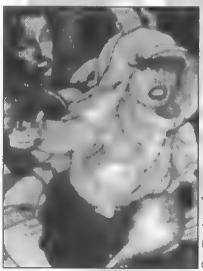
SORRY TO FORCE YOU INTO THIS, BUT YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO REVIEW THIS PORTFOLIO TO MAKE YOUR DECISION. SEVERAL TIMES, PROBABLY, TO BE SURE BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT. AHH, JUST BE GLAD YOU'RE NOT ON THE O.J. SIMPSON JURY.

1. **WARRIOR NUN AREALA.** The miniseries from Antarctic Press surprised retailers with strong sales and cool story. Look for the trade paperback due out soon. Areala is one of the few remaining — get this — warrior nuns, a special class of fighters. She looks like a Gen 13 sweetheart, carries a sword, and battles Satan. What more could you get for in a woman? She deserves your vote.

Warrior Nun Areala ™ & © 1995 Antarctic Press. Vampirella ™ & © 1995 Harris Publications Inc.

2. KABUKI. It looks like Shi. It's got a Japanese theme like Shi. But it ain't Shi. Kabuki is a different twist on the female-asian-warrior thing, where the story is told using the Frank Miller method: detached, from a distance, in the darkness...

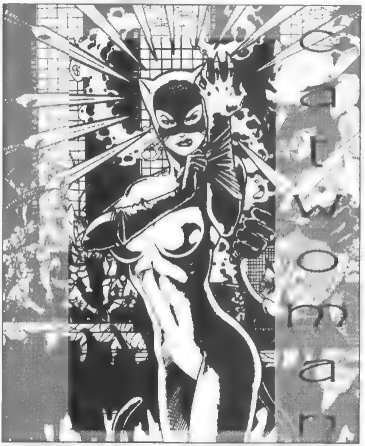




3. GHOST. Mysterious, sexy, and inked with faded colors like Sue Storm, that's **Ghost**. Dark Horse's Comics' Greatest World launch may have been long forgotten, but the more popular characters like Ghost and X have stayed on. An underrated book for sure.

GHOST

4. CATWOMAN. This feline devil will soon form an alliance with one mob family to stop another. Catwoman has been gaining favor among the fans (that's you). Check out the **Catwoman Annual #2** which makes a major addition to her origin by introducing her sensei — due out in a few weeks.



Kabuki ™ & © 1995 David Mack. Ghost ™ & © 1995 Dark Horse. Catwoman ™ & © 1995 DC Comics.

SHAIANA

5. ***SHAIANA: ASTER*** #1 introduced Shaiana, and Isabedra's hot pencils made her an instant star. Shaiana, besides being really hard to spell, has her own chromium-covered first issue due out next month. Newcomer Dr. Jay Anciato makes an impressive artistic debut (when he's not drawing, he's drilling or doing a filling).

NIRA X

6. ***NIRA X***. Also part of Entity's insane triple-chromium cover month, **Nira X** #1 is drawn by underrated talent Bill Maus. This issue Nira's back in New York, saving the city from evil and all of that sort of stuff. (In case you're wondering, Entity's third chromium is **Aster: The Last Celestial Knight** #1.)

Shaiana ™ & © 1995 CATS Studios. Nira X ™ & © 1995 B. Maus.

7. AVENGELYNE. Listen to this job. Be the Vampirella model, fly around the world pretending you're Vampirella, have sex-starved geeky comic heads drool at the sight of you. Yes, you can do this for a living and not only that — there's room for lateral movement. Former Vampirella model Cathy Christian has moved to Image to become Avengelyne. (On the cover is the new Vampirella. Harris won't release her real name. "She's just Vampirella," said a spokesman.)

AVENGELYNE

MANTRA

8. MANTRA. Mantra + Loki! Yes, it's the weirdest love story ever, and it's happening right now in Malibu comics! Vantage has had the hots for Mantra for a long time, but we just wish she wasn't a man. It does kinda ruin it, ya know?

9. CHINA & JAZZ. A sweet chromium cover and nice artwork surprised readers when Double Impact's first book came out. This one could be a sleeper

Avengelyne ™ & © 1995 Cathy Christian. Mantra ™ & © 1995 Malibu. China & Jazz ™ & © 1995 Double Impact

10. ***DAWN.*** *Really, really nice art from Sirius again. The first issue of a new mini goes on sale in July.*

11. ***GLORY.*** *Rising super-star Mike Deodato does some nice pencils for the new Glory series. But what is it with all of these women and swords? Must all heroines own a sword? If we had to fight big, husky guys in tights who could fly, bend bars, and stuff like that, man, we'd pack a gun.*

GLORY

12. ***RAZOR.*** *Numbers have been going up steadily for Razor, and London Night Studio's desire to publish a Razor book, no matter what is a testament to that. This book is legitimately hot.*

RAZOR

Dawn ™ & © 1995 JM Lineker. Glory ™ & © 1995 Image. Razor ™ & © 1995 London Night Studios.

13. *HELLINA.* *If you didn't think Hellina was hot before, wait 'til you see the NAKED-HELLINA-BY-DEODATO COVER to come out this summer wrapped around the Hellina/Bloodfire crossover. Also, look for a continuing Hellina nude campaign — additional nude covers from an impressive roster of artists. Hellina is pretty bad, having been created by the devil, she's armed with a telekinetic dagger (really cool) and a leather whip.*

14. *WONDER WOMAN.* *The pages we've seen from Byrne's first Wonder Woman book are pretty darn good — not his best work ever, but they'll do.*

WONDER WOMAN

Hellina ™ & © 1995 Lightning Comics. Wonder Woman ™ & © 1995 DC Comics.

WIN VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA SIGNED BY BUZZ!

You lucky son of a gun! All you need do is fill out the coupon below and you could be randomly selected to win! One lucky stiff will walk away with a Vengeance of Vampirella #13 signed by Buzz.

If this fantastic offer doesn't get your blood going, call an ambulance. Remember, tell us below what you're honestly thinking. Your input will help us to make **Vantage** even better for YOU!

Vote For Your Favorite New "Bad Girl!"

☐ **YES!!!** **I want to win Vengeance of Vampirella Signed By Buzz!**

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I think the most up-and-coming bad girls in comics are (choose from list provided on the previous pages):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

☐ (Optional) Hey **Vantage**, as long as I'm writing you, here's my quick two cents for Vantage Viewpoints! I want you to know what my dream crossover would be, what I think of this month's news, what I'm having for dinner tonight, or some other pointless drivel:

_____

_____

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I usually get my Vantage *(check one)*: ☐ At a store ☐ From a mail order company ☐ From a distributor ☐ By subscription ☐ Other _____

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ROBIN #17

Hey, when **Vantage** and **Wizard** agree, pay attention, y'know? We've both called Mike Wieringo a rising star. Having rocketed ahead with his impressive Flash artwork, Wieringo now turns his attention towards Robin.

Wieringo's first Robin book will be #19, but ever before that his art graces the covers to #18 and #17. So for the first true Wieringo Robin, Vantage is the place to be.

Vantage has made special arrangements to subsidize the costs of producing signed comics — we are passing the savings on to you, our valued customers! Don't ever pay $30-$60 for a signed book again! *Vantage Signature Series* comics are signed and strictly limited to unanimously low quantities, and we truly affordable! The catch? There's two of 'em:

1). You must use the coupon provided— no copies.

2). If we receive over 50 orders we will return checks at random (sorry, we have no choice)!

OFFER EXPIRES JULY 15, 1995

☐ Yes, I'd like *Robin #17*, personally signed by artist Mike Wieringo, limited to 50 produced by **Vantage**, with accompanying certificate of authenticity! I understand that if **Vantage** receives orders for over 50 copies, my coupon and money may be selected at random to be returned (I will receive a full refund).

Enclosed is $6.95 + $2.00 (shipping)= $8.95 total
Canadian orders add 40%. All other foreign, add U.S. $2.00.

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COMICS ARE FOR READING First!

By Rich Keller

Once upon a time in a galaxy far, far away, there was this writer at Marvel Comics named Chris. One day, way back in the 1970s, the head honchos at the Bullpen gave Chris the assignment of taking over a book about a bunch of people with extraordinary powers who constantly felt sorry for themselves. They were called the Y-People, or, the Uncanny X-Guys, or something like that. Anyway, this Chris guy took the job, not realizing what an impact he would have on this particular bunch of merry mutants.

Eventually, Chris got a last name, Claremont, and for 15 or so years he made a name for himself in the X-Men empire, until his untimely, and some say unfair, departure from the title in 1991. For the last four or so years he's concentrated on three successful science fiction novels, a Star Trek graphic novel, as well as other non-super-hero projects. That is until now, for Mr. Claremont has moved across the street to good ol' DC (well technically not across the street, but in the same city) where he has unveiled a new superhero team that will join the ranks of **Justice League**, **The New Titans**, and **The Inferior Five**.

Vantage readers, meet Cascade, Network, Reflex, Rampart, Finale, Indigo, and Cruiser. You'll eventually get to know them all as the Sovereign Seven.

Mr. Claremont has moved across the street to good ol' DC (well, not technically across the street, but in the same city) where he has unveiled a new super hero team that will join the ranks of Justice League, The New Titans and The Inferior Five

'CAUSE STOMPA, SHE CALLS FIRST DIBS!
ANOTHER ONE?!
HOW MANY ARE THERE?!!
'NUFF TA DO Y'...IN SUBSTANCE AN' STYLE!
THE JOB, SWEETMEAT...
I'M MAD HARRIET!
BETCHA CAN'T GUESS WHY?
Stormbringer Seven™ & © 1995 C. Claremont & D. Turner

Created and written by Claremont, **Sovereign Seven** marks one of the first creator-owned books in the DC Universe; therefore, Chris could move his characters to the Dark Horse universe if he felt like it. The story involves these seven heroes, all members of ruling families from another planet, who crash land, of course, on Earth. However, unlike most aliens that arrive on Earth everyday in the DC Universe, these people have never even heard of our wonderful little mudball. Their goal is to find out who sent them there and why.

There are plenty of things that go right for this series. The main thing being the fact that Claremont is not only the writer, but he is also the creator of all these characters. Therefore, by the very first issue, the readers already know a lot about these heroes' attitudes. For instance, Cascade, team leader, is a passionate, but levelheaded fighter; Cruiser is the hotheaded new recruit who thinks he knows the score, but doesn't; and Network is the quiet telepath who can handle herself in battle if need be. Unlike his initial days writing **Uncanny X-Men**, there is no awkwardness in these heroes' characterizations.

Another thing going for this book is that even as early as the premiere issue, these heroes are thrown smack dab in the middle of the DC Universe, where they encounter a particularly hard hitter: Darkseid. However, this is not the Darkseid readers are used to. He's an eloquent godlike being intent on conquering the universe, who actually makes apologies for the actions of his Female Furies. Claremont makes Darkseid seem almost human and godlike at the same time.

While they're heroes, Claremont paints his team as a bunch of real people. They realize their mistakes if they occur. They weigh the good and bad of a situation and make a determination whether or not it can and should be defended against. And, if they make a mess of a small town bar, they grab the brooms and clean up. I'm sure Flash and Hawkman haven't picked up mops in quite some time. They don't use their fists as their brains. Claremont's heroes are written as quite intelligent.

They don't use their fists as their brains. Claremont's heroes are written as quite intelligent.

picks

Lots of new lines premiered at February's Toy Fair in New York, but the shining star at the show was kept under wraps until an open house event held two weeks after the show. Kenner's long-awaited return to Star Wars is a reality and legions of fans are waiting to pounce. The new figures will be in a slightly larger scale than the originals, with all new sculpting. Based on Kenner's history of short-packing villains and females, expect some figures to be hard to find. Original molds will be used for the vehicles (X-Wing, Tie Fighter, Landspeeder and Millenium Falcon) which will feature elaborate paint jobs and light and sound features. Based on the current frenzy for any Star Wars-related merchandise, **Vantage** gives these its highest rating. Old Star Wars toys continue to rise in value daily as anticipation builds for the slated rerelease of the first trilogy, to be followed by a new trio of films.

On a related note, Kenner's Action Masters Star Wars 4-pack shipped to only a couple of cities during their test marketing last November. These impossible-to-find toys can be ordered direct from Kenner by calling 1-800-327-8264. When you call you will be given a reference number and an address to send a check or money order. These are one per customer and no guarantee you will get one, but your chances of finding one in stores are nil so what have you got to lose?

On the recent release front, Series 2 Spawn figures arrived with an early-release variation in the Commando Spawn figure. Some first-release guns are speckled. This has been changed in the current release and Todd Toys has stated that less than a thousand of this variation were produced. Check your collection! Collectors will get another chance at the super rare Malebolgia figure later in the year. This figure is currently selling for $30–$50 dollars on the secondary market, but you can get one for a more affordable price. Todd Toys is planning a direct market Spawn vs. Malebolgia two-pack which will be available at comic shops only. Todd also unveiled his '95 line at Toy Fair along with two spin-off lines, Youngblood and Wetworks. These figures are incredible, especially the Wetworks line. In the new series, watch for Cosmic Angela from Spawn, and the Werewolf and Vampire from Wetworks to go fast. These figures will ship in the fall and **Vantage** will update you on packing ratios in future issues. Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.S line continues despite the animated show being dropped by CBS.

These figures (ToddToys) are incredible, especially the Wetworks line.

Female figures Void and Voodoo will join the lineup along with repaints of some first series figures. Playmates is also planning two-packs of first series figures with special paint jobs, exclusive comic books, and diorama bases for display. The two-packs will include Spartan vs. Helspont and Grifter vs. Daemonite. These should begin to appear around June.

The big news out of Toy Biz regards a figure previously spotlighted in **Vantage**. The Phoenix Saga assortment is getting a facelift in mid production as Toy Biz changes over to '95 blister card art. First release figures on the old card will be highly sought after, especially the Phoenix figure.

The new Fantastic Four assortment with the Invisible Woman and Human Torch should be appearing in June and sources report that the tooling on these two figures will not be ready in time. In order to keep these figures in the assortment, Toy Biz is packing repainted existing figures for a limited time until production begins on the new molds. Human Torch will be a repainted Silver Surfer and Invisible Woman will be a repainted Spider-Woman. Production on these figures will be around 50,000. A "bridge" release of this nature is highly unusual, and extremely collectible.

The new assortment of Tick figures from Bandai are out and all are in short supply due to the packing ratio of these cases. The entire first series, except for Der Fliedermaus and Man Eating Cow is now available, but are only coming one or two of each to a case. The animated show is gaining cult status and these figures should be sought after for years to come as more fans discover this delightful series.

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Sovereign Seven ™ & © 1995 C. Claremont & D. Turner

Vantage: *What kind of script does Claremont give you?*

Turner: Chris's scripts are pretty involved. It's not involved to the point where you don't have the room to play around with things or to play with the pacing of the storytelling. The great thing about working with Chris is that he will give you a lot of stuff to work with where you don't have to guess — what does he want here or what does he want there? It's pretty clear and everything is there but it's not crowded. There is always room to play around with the pace, to slow it down or speed it up for more impact. His action stuff is great because every time it is challenging and he never seems to ride it. He kind of sets up these mousetraps where everybody has got to be in the right place and as soon as the first guy gets hit it triggers something and then everything kind of unravels. And I know that happened in the first and second issues where the setup for the action scene was kind of important and, hopefully, when people see it they will understand what we were after.

Vantage: *That's interesting. So, does he tell you where each character is going to be positioned in the panel?*

Turner: Well, not really. In #1 there was a scene in there where we have the Warboy. And there comes the part where Cascade has actually got to fight these guys and one is trying to attack her on the ground and one is trying to shoot her. All of a sudden what you realize is that if you are going to be able to make the action work the way Chris has written it, that you've got to make sure to position everybody so that the action he asks for makes sense because if a guy is too far away or too far to the left or to the right, all of a sudden when he spins to shoot someone but misses and hits another person, it doesn't work. So that's the kind of thing I'm talking about. You have to set it up so that it has a chance to work.

Vantage: *On one of the opening pages of #1 there is a full-sized picture of the medallion. And each facet of it has a face in it. That is really an ornate, interesting looking medallion and the way the faces are is really neat. How did he communicate something like that to you? Does he just*

What's it like to work with a legend? Up and coming artist Dwayne Turner is finding out as artist on Chris Claremont's Sovereign Seven! Prior to making history on the Seven, he had racked up an impressive array of credits himself, on Wolverine and Spider-Man for Marvel, and Stormwatch for Image. The accomplished artist now talks about the title that's got everyone in comics talking about him.

WE NEED SANCTUARY AS MUCH AS THAT FOOL FOOL WE RESCUED.
EACH DAY, YOUNG COMRADE, IN ITS TURN. EACH MOMENT AS IT COMES.
AND THEN THERE'S THIS.
HE HAD IT, THEY WANTED IT, OR SO THEYVE TOLD US. LIES, MAYBE. WORTHY WORDS, MAYBE?

Sovereign Seven ™ & © 1995 C. Claremont & D. Turner

basically say "make a medallion"?

Turner: Yeah.

Vantage: *And then the rest of it is up to you, how ornate it is and all that stuff is basically up to you?*

Turner: Exactly. He will basically lay it out for me, what he needs and the fact that the characters need to be placed inside of this jewel and, I guess, at whatever reactions there may be. Maybe they are startled, stunned or whatever the case is. But I guess how ornate the jewel is, yeah, that is kind of left up to me. He doesn't say "Well, I saw this piece at Tiffany's, check this out." You know, give me something that is pretty nice or pretty interesting looking and then put these guys in there.

Vantage: *So how's it been, working with someone who's a living legend?*

Turner: Well, he is. I think about it like as a kid, I'm a big basketball fan and unfortunately the Knicks never called, so this is what I do. It's almost like getting to play with one of those guys that you've always looked at on the basketball court. I didn't get to do that but this is great. I get a chance to play around in comics with Chris Claremont and he has been great. He has been great to work with. I mean quite easy to work with in that he makes it fun.

Sovereign Seven ™ & © 1995 C. Claremont & D. Turner

Vantage: *He hands you the script and then you go from there or do you talk about it on the phone or anything?*

Turner: We've kind of sat down and had these conversations and figured out where we we're going to go with the first six or nine issues. Then when Chris comes back, from what those rough ideas were, you have these polished jewels of a plot.

Vantage: *The book has kind of an **X-Men** feel to it. Are you doing that on purpose or do you think it is just coming through in his writing or do I not know what I'm talking about?*

Turner: I guess I don't know if it's an ***X-Men*** feel or if it's just a Chris Claremont feel. Chris

I get a chance to play around in comics with Chris Claremont and he has been great. I mean quite easy to work with in that he makes it fun.

has done his thing with the **X-Men** for 15-16 years. I would just attribute it to it's Chris doing his thing rather than it being LIKE the **X-Men.**

Vantage: *How did you wind up on* ***Sovereign Seven****?*

Turner: I actually got a call from the editor of the book who said that Chris was looking at a few people and trying to find out who would be interested and he had seen some stuff of mine that he liked. I was definitely excited about it from the beginning, so as soon as they said they were interested we were almost on, right from then.

Vantage: *Were you already a Chris Claremont fan?*

Turner: Oh, yeah, I had always read the **X-Men.** That was really, at the time, the only book that I guess you could say that I was a fan of — the **X-Men** when John Byrne was working on it with Claremont and Byrne together.

In a few advance letters people said...it looks more like an Image book than a DC book. I don't really know what to say about that. It's not bad, I'll take it.

The "medallion" page for issue #1

Vantage: *What was it that you liked about the* ***X-Men*** *when you were reading it?*

Turner: I don't want to say that it had this soap opera feel to it, but I guess in that it was handled somewhat differently than most comic books in that the characters seemed to be a bit more involved. Getting the characters down seemed to be more important than tearing up things for however many pages the book may have been. I guess it was the characterization that Chris was able to bring to those characters. The things that they would do and the things they got involved in were quite a bit different from what seemed to be done in other comics.

Vantage: *What would you say if I told you that your art in* ***Sovereign Seven*** *makes it more like an Image book than a DC book? Would that surprise you?* (Laughter)

Turner: Well, I guess I shouldn't be surprised by it. In a few advance letters that we've gotten from people who have seen a few pages from the book they have said exactly that — that it looks more like an Image book than a DC book. I guess I know what that means but, you know, I don't really know what to say about that. It's not bad, I'll take it.

Vantage: *Yeah, I'd say it was either a compliment or... I wouldn't say it was*

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Cover to issue #2

I had always read the X-Men. That was really, at the time, the only book I guess you could say that I was a fan of—the X-Men when John Byrne was working on it with Claremont.

putting you down.

Turner: Yeah, I'll take that. I don't have a problem with that. Those guys over at Image are doing great things. I love the stuff that is being done by Jim Lee or Silvestri. Those guys are doing great looking stuff.

Vantage: *How long are you scheduled to do Sovereign?*

Turner: I guess indefinitely.

Vantage: *It's open ended?*

Turner: Until we're not having fun with it anymore. I guess if I had said "Well, I'm only going to do 10, 12 or whatever, you're kind of looking down at the light at the end of the tunnel. This way, just take each issue and try and have as much fun with it as possible."

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PRO'S PERSPECTIVE

ARE INDEPENDENT COMICS LIKE GREEN EGGS & HAM?

By Steve Zykowski, Vice President, Lightning Comics

It seems to me that comics fans sometimes don't want to read independent comics. I wonder why this is? It's as if they were green eggs and ham; seemingly unappealing and something to be avoided. But I don't think that should be the case at all. So please, read carefully.

Over the past several months, major changes have taken place in the comic industry. These changes have everyone from retailers to publishers feeling, well ... quite helpless. Why helpless? because the general feeling is that no matter what happens, the comics industry will be forced to do whatever MARVEL COMICS tells them to do. Either that, or they'll be out of business. I know, because I've been there myself, spending hours and hours trying to figure out what I can do as a smaller independent publisher that will make me invulnerable to MARVEL'S "MARVELUTION" (which is really a major takeover conspiracy). What I've come up with is a small plan that's geared toward retailers. However, if you're not a retailer, you should continue reading this article — the direct market and all of its independent publishers are counting on you, the fan, collector, and retailer for its survival.

In my hours of pondering, one thing became very clear to me — diversity. The direct market, with its independent publishers, composes a very diverse and alternative reading selection. I'll bet a million dollars that you'll never find a copy of **Lady Death, Sin City, Gen 13, Shi,** OR **Bloodfire** at your local 7-11 or Kmart. There's a reason why this is so. It's because none of these titles are "mainstream" enough to sell in places like that. But all of the above-mentioned titles sell in the millions every year at specialty comics shops to readers who are willing to try something different. Try them, try them, SAM I AM — and you will like them, these GREEN EGGS & HAM.

So, who are you? Are you a MARVEL zombie? Collecting every copy of the "X" titles, or the many Spider-Man books? Are you a DCeased fan, collecting all the "zero" comics? And if you are, why? There's more to life than MARVEL or DC. You will like the GREEN EGGS & HAM of the comics industry — if you only try them, SAM I AM.

Are you a retailer? Why don't you order titles from Chaos Comics? Or maybe from some of the others: Crusade, Harris, Cartoon Books, Lightning Comics or Comico? Don't you see that there is much, much more that you could be *selling* in your store? Here's a suggestion: If a customer reads **The Punisher** suggest that he (or she) may also like the gun-toting, macho marine **Bloodfire.** I bet he (or she) will get hooked and all of a sudden, you'll be selling twice as many titles. Have you got a dozen **Lobo** fanatics? Tell them to try Chaos' **Evil Ernie** — he'll definitely satisfy their thirst for raw action.

What I'm suggesting is that you turn your customers onto books in the same genre that they'll never find anywhere else, because what you are really doing is protecting your own butt and your customers will even thank you for it. Also, on a much grander scale, you're preserving the direct market which is part of your lifeblood as a retailer. You'll never get a better discount on comics than in the direct market, so help out and protect it.

Just like Dr. Seuss believed, you'll never know what you're missing until you try it. And if you never try, you may never succeed. So, fans, dealers, collectors, and readers, come on and give it a try. Try the GREEN EGGS & HAM of the comics industry and before you know it, you'll be saying "I DO LIKE THEM! I DO LIKE GREEN EGGS & HAM! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! SAM I AM!"

Poison Elves™ & © 1995 Drew Hayes

INTERVIEW WITH POISON ELVES CREATOR DREW HAYES

Drew Hayes is the creator, writer, and penciler of **Poison Elves.** Until recently, **Poison Elves** was self-published by Hayes himself. The setting for **Poison Elves** is a fantasy world, similar to a sword and sorcery kind of "realm," with elves, humans, trolls, and many other different types of creatures. The main character, Lusipher, is an elf who travels around the fantasy world, encountering many strange situations and dangers. **Poison Elves** will be published with a new first issue by Sirius, with Hayes continuing as the writer/penciler.

***VANTAGE:** What is Poison Elves?*

Hayes: It's the evolution, trials and tribulations of an individual who dwells in a world. **Poison Elves** is a little darker and a little more subversive than, say, **Wandering Star.** "Normal" fantasy usually revolves around a certain group of characters. You have the main character; maybe a scantily-clad, barbarian woman; an elf who is very mysterious, always carrying around a bow and arrow; a dwarf; things like that. This group of characters is put together for some reason, and they have to run around together and do all these certain things. Like quest fantasy. In **Poison Elves,** we come to know the main character through the world that he goes through. That individual is Lusipher.

***VANTAGE:** You also have another character known as the Purple Marauder?*

Hayes: Yes. When you get into the instance of the Purple Marauder, I can see him offending hundreds of people.

Poison Elves™ & © 1995 Drew Hayes

VANTAGE: *Why?*

Hayes: It has to do with what his character represents. The Purple Marauder represents loathing hate for women; things that are just extremely, politically incorrect!

VANTAGE: *But he's a character in the story!*

Hayes: I know. But people take him quite seriously. You can do something just so incredibly, elaborately evil in a book and then do something so insignificant and people will write you letters about the insignificant thing. They'll haunt you about it and you'll never get a letter about what you did that was so evil. The Purple Marauder, I don't find anything wrong with. I mean, the letters I get about him are from people wondering if he's homosexual or not, which is a question I never intend to answer. The thing about him is that he comes in, slams the HELL out of women; he's disgusting in the manner that he does it and I can see where he would tend to offend people.

Poison Elves™ & © 1995 Drew Hayes

VANTAGE: *Is that your most controversial thing?*

Hayes: Well, I don't know. You are asking really hard questions, now. I don't really do self examination to this extent. Or the book for that matter.

VANTAGE: *Sirius will be publishing* ***Poison Elves*** *now, starting with a number one. What is the status with the books now?*

Hayes: What is going on with the books right now is I stopped publishing them with issue #20. Issue #1 is coming out and issue #1 starts out the story line that would have been issue #25 if I was still self-publishing.

VANTAGE: *How long do you plan on keeping this up?*

Hayes: Keeping what up?

VANTAGE: *Doing* ***Poison Elves*** *as opposed to any other book?*

Hayes: Until it's done. I see it going on for anywhere from 200-250 issues.

VANTAGE: *So, like a* ***Cerebus*** *type of endurance?*

Hayes: Yeah. I mean there are so few titles when it comes to fantasy.

When you get into the instance of the Purple Marauder, I can see him offending hundreds of people.

THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

By Corey Bond

It was September 27th, 1985. I was in high school, and as a lifelong science fiction addict, had long been anticipating the premiere of the new Twilight Zone series on CBS. The debut episode was killer: "Shatterday," starring Bruce Willis (of Die Hard and Moonlighting fame). For weeks afterward I was telling all of my friends and family the story about this guy who accidentally dialed his own phone number from a bar, and how his life took a terrifying turn when he heard his own voice answer the call.

It wasn't until months later when, perusing the offerings in the latest Science Fiction Book Club bulletin, I came across a book entitled *Shatterday*. It was a collection of short stories by some author named Harlan Ellison.

My introduction to the writings of Harlan Ellison was circuitrous, beginning in the virtual wasteland of television.

Impressed by Alan Brennert's teleplay adaptation that had aired on The New Twilight Zone, I decided to order the book and check out the original story.

As is the case with all written word to film transitions, the original piece was superior. Since then, I have never sighted any work by Harlan Ellison on a bookstore shelf that I didn't automatically, on good faith, take home with me. Never have I been disappointed.

Mefisto In Onyx is an excellent example. I discovered it in a comic shop in Texas. Originally published as a short story in Omni magazine, this hardcover novella probably had a better-than-average chance of being stocked by comics retailers, thanks to its striking cover by Frank Miller. The cover is wrap-around black-and-white artwork that is unmistakably Miller. As a matter of fact, a friend of mine, upon spotting *Mefisto In Onyx* propped up on my bookshelf, asked if it was a present gift-wrapped in Sin City wrapping paper.

This compelling thriller by Ellison also contains an insightful Introduction by Frank Miller, who gives a frightening account of his experience addressing the inmates in a prison in Delaware. Concerned Parent groups should enlist Miller's aid for some sort of Scared Straight program to keep kids from turning to crime. It would have worked on me.

Readers who keep track of the creative personnel responsible for navigating TV's science fiction offerings may be aware of Ellison's consultant credit on Babylon 5. I mention this because of a story I once read stating the possibility of a Babylon 5/ Outer Limits crossover. You see, one of the best episodes of The Outer Limits was "Demon With A Glass Hand" by

Text and illustrations for Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor ™ & © 1995 The Kilimanjaro Corporation

MAYBE THE WORLD NEEDS, LIKE, ANOTHER THING. THESE DAYS AND I CAN STILL TASTE THEM...
LOOK, TED... WE AGREE AS WELL-BOY HOW THE ICE CANDENS. IT CAN'T BE ANY WORSE THERE THAN HERE.
YOU KNOW IT CAN'T BE ANY WORSE ANYWHERE. EVERYTHING IS JUST AS BAD AS AN MAKES IT.
LET'S TRY, TED. I'VE GOT TO HAVE SOMETHING. MAYBE THERE'LL BE SOME BAST-LATT PEARS OR SOME-THING.
ALL RIGHT. HERE'S THE HAL.
PLEASE, TED. LET'S TRY.

Text and illustrations for Harlan Ellisons Dream Corridor ™ & © 1995 The Killmanjaro Corporation

Harlan Ellison. It starred Robert Culp (Agent Maxwell from The Greatest American Hero, a series now airing on the F/X network that has not aged at all well) as Trent, a lonely android fated to roam the earth for thousands of years, awaiting the opportunity to save all of humanity.

Rumor had it that an episode of Babylon 5 written by Ellison and guest-starring Culp would revive the character of Trent, who would no doubt have some ominous purpose for visiting the most important space station in the galaxy. I consider this an exciting scenario, and if through some bizarre series of events this episode exists and I missed it, I implore someone to please mail me the videotape.

I once had the honor of hearing Harlan Ellison present a speech at a conference in Atlanta. It was a touching commentary on how comics fans and retailers seem to have lost touch with the rich history of the comic book medium. Too many kids, to paraphrase Ellison, think of Jim when we say that Lee created The X-Men. The tone of the speech was set, in part, by the lack of recognition the late Harvey Kurtzman, creator of Mad magazine and numerous comic series, received for his contributions to the art form.

Reading Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special was a delight.

Anyone interested in a transcript of the speech should seek out Calliope Comics' Musings #1. It appears within those pages under the title "Say It Ain't So." Although it's a moving piece, reading it still doesn't compare to witnessing Harlan Ellison break up near the end of his presentation of it. Ellison, in addition to being a famed writer, is a powerful public speaker.

When I was a comics retailer, I often succumbed to the weary, jaded cynicism that results from trying to push quality comic books on customers, only to have my words fall on the deaf ears of "fanboys" interested exclusively in what was "hot" at the moment. It is difficult for me to express what Harlan Ellison's sincerity meant to me, or how much of a "recharge" I received from his speech. Living as I do in a society where imitating the Beavis and Butt-head laugh is a viable form of self-expression, I take much comfort in the existence of such a crusader for the intellectual and the literate.

It is a relief to know that whenever I've burned out (as I often do) on the proliferation of bad entertainment promulgated by the mass media, I can take refuge in a piece of work either created or recommended by Harlan Ellison and experience a mental renewal. Which brings me to my recommended reading for this month. In a market under siege by a publisher hell-bent on making theirs the dominant crap on the shelves, it is refreshing to be able to sing the praises of a comic series worthy of the designation "literature": Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor.

In case you are skeptical, rest assured that this is not one of those projects where a popular author lends his name to the title and has nothing more to do with it. Or, as is the case with Tekno•Comix, where a big-name creator comes up with a concept for a series, and then others

are hired to actually write and draw it. The stories in Dream Corridor are adaptations from the seemingly inexhaustible Ellison short story treasury, and he is involved in every facet of the editorial process.

Reading Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special was a delight, and it has me eagerly anticipating the first regular issue, which should be out by the time you read this. The Special boasts the talents of such comic professionals as Len Wein, Pat Broderick, the late Doug Wildey, Faye Perozich, Matt Howarth, Gary Gianni, and one of my all-time favorite cartoonists, Phil Foglio. Additionally, the back cover is by movie poster artist Overton Loyd, and there is a centerfold spread by hardcover and paperback artist Jill Bauman.

The front cover is part of one of the most special aspects of Dream Corridor. Each issue is set to contain an all-new, never-before-published short story by Harlan Ellison (which alone is worth the price of admission), centered around a front-cover painting by such giants as Steve Hickman (who provides the cover for the Special), Michael Whelan, Leo and Diane Dillon, and Ken Steacy, among others. Nowhere else in comics are you going to find this mega-gathering of talent. Only the genius of Ellison fiction could assemble such a cast.

Do yourself a tremendous favor. Let the tumultuous upheaval of the comics industry pass you by unacknowledged and seek out Dark Horse's most ambitious offering to date: Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor.

While I am on the topic of Harlan Ellison, I would like to comment on a most pathetic foot-note to the fame of this eminent author: the Enemies of Ellison (now known, I believe, as the Victims of Ellison). This is a little hate club of people with nothing better to do than share

EYES AS BLUE AS DIESEL EXHAUST, EIGHTEEN-- NOT A DIME OLDER. BUT YOU KNOW WHAT PUGWUN SAID: OLD ENOUGH TO BLEED, IS OLD ENOUGH TO BUTCHER.

I would like to comment on a most pathetic foot note to the fame of this eminent author: the Enemies of Ellison.

their rants and raves about how they were so mistreated by Ellison, one of the most stand-up writers in the business. It's membership includes such individuals as Comics Journal publisher Gary Groth, whose character I shall not comment upon, lest he launch one of his customary diatribes against me or Vantage magazine as a whole.

If it were not for the pejorative effects this group's antics have had on Mr. Ellison's already poor health, I would classify their existence as "amusing." Like the Flash, Ellison now has his own Rogue's Gallery of small-time "enemies" who've banded together for a supposed strength in numbers. Although, on second thought, even that analogy is giving the Victims of Ellison way too much credit.

However, always one to enjoy leaping into a good fray, I nevertheless joined Peter David's counter-VOE strike force, the Friends of Ellison (or FOE) as soon as I heard about it. Perhaps the VOE and the FOE should all show up at the San Diego Comic Con in spandex costumes one year and battle it out. Or perhaps not.

Why did I join the FOE? Certainly not to receive Harlan Ellison's appreciation. He's always eschewed bothersome compliments and meaningless gushing, and despises the concept of a fan club. I simply believe in supporting those who are eloquently outspoken, especially those championing the cause of quality art and entertainment over mediocrity. And who knows? If it turns out that Harlan Ellison actually is God, then perhaps I'll be spared on Judgment Day after all.

(Corey Bond, Oblivious Columnist, would like to introduce everyone to his son, Matthew Joseph Bond, the first Oblivion Child. Matt will be about two months old when this sees print. Anyone wishing to discuss science fiction, comic books, movies, parenthood, or anything else can contact the proud father at OBLIVION, P.O. Box 5894, Lake Charles, LA 70606-5894. Yes, he resisted the urge to name the boy "James.")

Text and illustrations for Harlan Ellisons Dream Corridor ™ & © 1995 The Kilimanjaro Corporation

Cover Art from ***Poison Elves*** *#2*

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